

SACRED MUSIC AT COLUMBIA

concert 262

6pm on October 23, 2025, at St. Paul's Chapel

The Earl Hall Center for Religious Life at Columbia University

Dongsok Shin, harpsichord

Dongsok Shin was born in Boston, started piano lessons at age four with his mother, Chonghyo Shin, and continued studying with Nadia Reisenberg at Mannes College. After college, in the early 1980s, he converted exclusively to early keyboards — harpsichord, fortepiano, organ.

Mr. Shin has been a member of the internationally acclaimed baroque ensemble REBEL since 1997. He has appeared with the American Classical Orchestra, the American Symphony Orchestra, ARTEK, Bach Sinfonia (Washington), Baroque Music Montana, Carmel Bach Festival, Concert Royal, Dryden Ensemble, Early Music New York, Modern Musick (Washington), the New York Philharmonic, the Orchestra of Saint Luke's, the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Parthenia, Pro Musica Rara, Tafelmusik (Toronto), Tempesta di Mare (Philadelphia), the Toronto Bach Festival, and the Washington Bach Consort, among others. He has accompanied Renée Fleming, Rufus Müller, Jed Wentz, Marion Verbruggen,

and Barthold Kuijken in recital. He received international recognition as music director of baroque opera productions with the Mannes Camerata, has toured throughout the Americas and Europe, and has been heard on numerous radio broadcasts.

Mr. Shin is well known as a performer, recording engineer, producer, and editor of early music recordings for Acis Productions, ATMA Classique, Bridge, Dorian Sono Luminus, Ex Cathedra, Helicon, Hollywood Records, Lyrichord, Naxos, and Newport Classic. He tunes and maintains the early keyboard instruments of the Flint Collection in Delaware, and tunes for the Metropolitan Opera, and the Metropolitan Museum. His YouTube videos produced by the Met Museum, demonstrating their earliest known Bartolomeo Cristofori fortepiano from 1720, have garnered over a half-million views. He and his wife, the early keyboard player Gwendolyn Toth, have three grown children, two cats, and over twenty early keyboards.

PROGRAM

Prelude and Fugue in E J. C. F. Fischer (1656–1746)
from *Ariadne musica* (1702)

Prelude & Fugue in E J. S. Bach (1685–1750)
from *The Well Tempered Clavier*, book 2, BWV 878 (c. 1740)

Prelude (Presto) in C, DürG 4 (c. 1750). J. G. Goldberg (1727–56)

Ricercar a 3 Bach
from *The Musical Offering*, BWV 1079 (1747)

Prelude (Andante) and Fugue in F minor, DürG 5 (c. 1750). Goldberg

Passacaglia from “Uranie” Fischer
from *Musikalischer Parnassus* (c. 1738)

Ciaccona, after BWV 1004 (1720) Bach

ART NOTE**by Xiao Liu**

From Fischer to Bach to Goldberg, there is a shared pursuit of order and transformation — a structured way of thinking that allows individuality to exist within form. The music moves through precision without rigidity, leaving room for variation and subjectivity. It suggests that complexity and clarity can coexist, that discipline may itself be a condition of expression.

Franz Marc's *Fighting Forms* translates this sensibility into visual terms. Painted in 1914, it marks his most abstract and intense composition, where two fields of colors twist against one another in perpetual motion. Curved shapes intersect and fold into one another, generating movement without rupture. Color functions like rhythm, maintaining tension through relation rather than contrast. Marc described these late works as “kind experiments,” in which colored forms act as “active emotional agents” for joy, conflict, and despondency. The painting sustains multiplicity within a single field — a quiet articulation of forms that carries emotion within structure, where movement and progression press against each other yet remain balanced in stillness.

Xiao Liu is a Brooklyn-based artist, writer, and curator whose practice centers on interdisciplinarity, aesthetic inquiry, and critical reflection on transnational identity, cultural translation, and the politics of representation.



Franz Marc, *Kämpfende Formen* (*Fighting Forms*), 1914.

Oil on canvas, 35³/₄ × 51³/₄ inches. Bavarian State Painting Collections, Munich.

PROGRAM NOTES

by Marco Donato Tomassi

Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer (1656–1746) was born in western Bohemia and in 1689 was appointed Kappelmeister in Schlackenwerth (modern-day Ostrov, Czech Republic). In 1715, following the earlier marriage of Margrave Ludwig Wilhelm of Baden-Baden to the heiress of Schlackenwerth, Princess Sibylla Augusta, Fischer followed the court and moved to Rastatt (just miles east of the Rhine), where he served until his death. He is known to have composed nine dramas (none of which survive) and eight masses, which he never published, but he is most remembered today for his keyboard and chamber music, which sought to unify the French and German styles and influenced later German composers.

Fischer's **Ariadne musica** (1702) is a systematic cycle of twenty preludes and fugues each in their own key and mode. His title references the mythical account of Theseus escaping the Minotaur's labyrinth using a ball of thread gifted by Ariadne, which, as you may suspect, is an allusion to the collection's "labyrinthine" arrangement of keys. The collection was a direct precedent to a later, more complete work — **Johann Sebastian Bach's** (1685–1750) **Well-Tempered Clavier** (*Das wohltemperierte Klavier*) — which across two books is a collection of 48 preludes and fugues in every major and minor key. Depending on when you are reading these notes, you may have already noticed something interesting between Fischer and Bach: the subjects (repeating idioms or melodies) of both E major fugues are identical.

As the title of Bach's collection implies, the work was written for a well temperament, where all keys could be played without unfavorable dissonances at certain intervals. This is in contrast to the earlier meantone temperaments, in which

said unfavorable intervals were unavoidable in key signatures with comparatively more sharps or flats. Although these new well temperaments permitted musicians to write and play in different keys, each with their own "palatable" but unique intervallic proportions, all was lost with the rise of equal temperament on modern pianos, which saw intervallic proportions in every key standardized to one ratio. Much musical and compositional nuance from music before 1900 is lost when performed in equal temperament.

There has been significant handwringing by performers and researchers of Bach to determine what exact temperament, or tuning, the composer intended the music be played in. Some have gone as so far to argue that the proportions of Bach's specific intended temperament (if he even had one) can be derived from the arrangement of elements on his signet ring, or even more absurdly, from a hidden mathematical structure of the decorative hand flourishes atop the title page of his manuscript (see **Figure 1**, on page 7). These numerological exercises in pattern recognition draw from a twentieth-century elevation and worship of Bach as deity, and today are of no value (beyond a quick laugh).

Much more could be said about Bach and his compositional intent, but his looming presence over German baroque music is uncontested due to his vast oeuvre (over 1,100 known works for keyboard, organ, voice and continuo, chorus, orchestra, and others), his travel and employment in various courts and churches across Germany, and as the progenitor of the most influential branch of the Bach musical dynasty. A particularly interesting anecdote about his life comes from the story behind his **Musical Offering** (*Das Musikalische Opfer*). During a visit to Potsdam to see his second son, Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach, who was a court musician to King Frederick II of

Prussia, J.S. Bach was challenged by the king to improvise a fugue from a chromatic melody he played on flute. The **Ricercar a 3** performed today is likely a refined version of the improvised work.

Johann Gottlieb Goldberg (1727–56) was born in Danzig (now Gdansk), but unlike Fischer and Bach, very little is known about his short life and career. He is speculated to have studied with either J.S. Bach or his eldest son, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach, in the 1730s, when Goldberg was retained by Hermann Karl von Keyserlingk, the Russian ambassador to Saxony (based in Dresden 1734–45 and after 1749). Goldberg remained in service in Saxony under Count Heinrich von Brühl from 1751 until his early death five years later.

His **Prelude in C major**, DürG 4, is a rapid and virtuosic piece in the style of a toccata, which attests to the contemporaneous accounts of the composer being a highly able performer. The **Prelude and Fugue in F minor**, DürG 5, demonstrate Goldberg's ability to combine the learned fugal method with a tendency toward the phrasing and textural nuance of the *empfindsamer Stil* (sentimental/feeling style) typical of the 1750s and seen most famously in the keyboard music of C.P.E. Bach.

German musicologist Johann Nikolaus Forkel claimed in 1802 that J.S. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* (1741), an aria and set of thirty melodic variations, were commissioned by Keyserlingk to be played by Goldberg on nights the ambassador was having difficulty sleeping. This story, though charming (who wouldn't want a

harpsichordist on-call to soothe them to sleep?), is most likely false.

What the work exemplifies, though, is how popular the form of musical variation was, well into the eighteenth century. Dance variation forms, like Fischer's **Passacaglia from "Uranie," from the Musikalischer Parnassus** (*Musical Parnassus*), and Bach's own **Chaconne** (Ciaccona) **from his Second Violin Partita** (BWV 1004), had been regularly composed during the prior four centuries in Italy, Spain, France, and, at the turn of the eighteenth century, Germany.

The chaconne is represented by a repeating harmonic formula, sometimes but not always with a repeating melodic bass line (known as a ground bass). This is very similar to the passacaglia, which employs a repeated melodic formula in the bass. But as plentiful as "textbook" examples are chaconnes with repeated ground basses and passacaglias structured only around harmonic formulas. Historically, scholars are still not sure of the difference between the terms. If they were interchangeable, why did both terms exist and continue to be used for so long? A fun challenge to set you on your way atop this Musical Parnassus is by trying to determine whether Fischer's and Bach's variations are based on a melodic or harmonic formula (it is difficult!).

Marco Donato Tomassi is a third-year PhD student in historical musicology at Columbia University. His primary research focuses on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian music and the eastern Mediterranean.



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Das Wohl temperirte Clavier!

Praeludia, zu

Fugen über alle Töne im Semitonien,
 Es ist, tertiam majorem als 12te die andere,
 gut, als eine tertiam minorem 12te.

Mi Fa Droppert. Zum
 Nutzen und Gehör der Liebhaber
 Musicalischen Können, als auch in Schulen
 die son Habit geübten Studenten
 Zeitvertrieb aufzuhalten

mit Vorrede von
 Johann Sebastian Bach.

J. S. Bach, Kantor
 in Arnstadt,
 Pfarrer in
 Weimar,
 Cantor
 in Jena.

1722.



Figure 1: D-B Mus.ms. Bach P 415

SACRED MUSIC AT COLUMBIA

Julian Bennett Holmes, Sacred Music Coordinator, Earl Hall Center for Religious Life

Free concerts at St. Paul's Chapel, Oct–Dec 2025

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Nikka Gershman plays Vivaldi, Liszt, Bach, and Schubert

Thu, Nov 6, 6pm Hidayat Khan & Anubrata Chatterjee

Hindustani music for voice, sitar, and tabla

Tue, Nov 11, 7pm Jocelyn Stewart, harpsichord

music of J. S. Bach and François Couperin

Thu, Nov 13, 6pm Ljova: “Enter the Fadolín”

music of Turlough O'Carolan, Dvořák, Bach, and Ljova

Thu, Nov 20, 6pm Richard X Bennett: ragas on piano

Ragas Yaman & Miyan Ki Malhar

Wed, Dec 3, 7:30pm A 17th-century German Christmas

an open rehearsal with TENET & Piffaro, the Renaissance Band

Fri, Dec 5, 6pm A Festival of Nine Lessons & Carols

hymns, carols, and readings for Advent & Christmas

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